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Addendum: competing interests and the origins of SARS-CoV-2



In February, 2020, 27 public health experts co-authored a Correspondence in *The Lancet* ("Statement in support of the scientists, public health professionals, and medical professionals of China combatting COVID-19"),¹ supporting health professionals and physicians in China during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this letter, the authors declared no competing interests. Some readers have questioned the validity of this disclosure, particularly as it relates to one of the authors, Peter Daszak. In line with guidance from the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, medical journals ask authors to report financial and non-financial relationships that may be relevant to interpreting the content of their manuscript.² There may be differences in opinion as to what constitutes a competing interest. Transparent reporting allows readers to make judgments about these interests. Readers, in turn, have their own interests that could influence their evaluation of the work in question. With these facts in mind, *The Lancet* invited the 27 authors of the letter to re-evaluate their competing interests. Peter Daszak has expanded on his disclosure statements for three pieces relating to COVID-19 that he co-authored or contributed to in *The Lancet*—the February, 2020, Correspondence,¹ as well as a Commission Statement³ and a Comment⁴ for the *Lancet* COVID-19 Commission. The updated disclosure statement from Peter Daszak is:

"PD's remuneration is paid solely in the form of a salary from EcoHealth Alliance, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organisation. EcoHealth Alliance's mission is to develop science-based solutions to prevent pandemics and promote conservation. Funding for this work comes from a range of US Government funding agencies and non-governmental sources. All past and current funders are listed publicly, and full financial accounts are filed annually and published. EcoHealth Alliance's work in China was previously funded by the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Neither PD nor EcoHealth Alliance have received funding from the People's Republic of China. PD joined the WHO-China joint

global study on the animal origins of SARS-CoV-2 towards the end of 2020 and is currently a member. As per WHO rules, this work is undertaken as an independent expert in a private capacity, not as an EcoHealth Alliance staff member. The work conducted by this study was published in March, 2021. EcoHealth Alliance's work in China includes collaboration with a range of universities and governmental health and environmental science organisations, all of which are listed in prior publications, three of which received funding from US federal agencies as part of EcoHealth Alliance grants or cooperative agreements, as publicly reported by NIH. EcoHealth Alliance's work in China is currently unfunded. All federally funded subcontractees are assessed and approved by the respective US federal agencies in advance and all funding sources are acknowledged in scientific publications as appropriate. EcoHealth Alliance's work in China involves assessing the risk of viral spillover across the wildlife-livestock-human interface, and includes behavioural and serological surveys of people, and ecological and virological analyses of animals. This work includes the identification of viral sequences in bat samples, and has resulted in the isolation of three bat SARS-related coronaviruses that are now used as reagents to test therapeutics and vaccines. It also includes the production of a small number of recombinant bat coronaviruses to analyse cell entry and other characteristics of bat coronaviruses for which only the genetic sequences are available. NIH reviewed the planned recombinant virus work and deemed it does not meet the criteria that would warrant further specific review by its Potential Pandemic Pathogen Care and Oversight (P3CO) committee. All of EcoHealth Alliance's work is reviewed and approved by appropriate research ethics committees, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, Institutional Review Boards for biomedical research involving human subjects, P3CO oversight administrators, and biosafety committees, as listed on all relevant publications."

The Correspondence, Commission Statement, and Comment are linked online to this notice of addendum.

We declare no competing interests.

Editors of The Lancet

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- 1 Calisher C, Carroll D, Colwell R, et al. Statement in support of the scientists, public health professionals, and medical professionals of China combatting COVID-19. *Lancet* 2020; **395**: e42–43.

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See [Comment](#) *Lancet* 2021; **397**: 947–50
See [Correspondence](#) *Lancet* 2020; **395**: e42–43
See [Commission Statement](#) *Lancet* 2020; **396**: 1102–24

- 2 International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Disclosure of financial and non-financial relationships and activities, and conflicts of interest. 2021. <http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/author-responsibilities--conflicts-of-interest.html> (accessed June 17, 2021).
- 3 The Lancet COVID-19 Commissioners, Task Force Chairs, and Commission Secretariat. Lancet COVID-19 Commission Statement on the occasion of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly. *Lancet* 2020; **396**: 1102–24.
- 4 Commissioners of the Lancet COVID-19 Commission, Task Force Chairs and members of the Lancet COVID-19 Commission, Commission Secretariat and Staff of the Lancet COVID-19 Commission. Priorities for the COVID-19 pandemic at the start of 2021: statement of the Lancet COVID-19 Commission. *Lancet* 2021; **397**: 947–50.



Acts of humanity: the Wakley Prize 2021

The characters of George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch* live through momentous times. It is the early 19th century. The railways are cutting mercilessly through the English countryside; Parliamentary reform is in the air, viciously debated at hustings and in the popular press; and in London, a new journal by the name of *The Lancet* has put the country's medical profession in an uproar. But this is not a story of great personages and heroic deeds. It is the tale of the choices made by individual people from diverse circumstances, the sort who might be well known in their local communities, but are destined to be forgotten by history. Yet Eliot asserts that their lives have importance. At the novel's conclusion, she writes that "the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs".¹ Eliot, in other words, maintains that "unhistoric acts"—small incidents of kindness, care, compassion, and conscience—can provide a shield against the evils of the world, and be a potent force for good. For this year's Wakley Prize,

we are interested in essays that take place on a human scale in health-care and community settings, across their diversity of environments, of the "hidden life" whose contact with others provides moments of care, witness, challenge, humour, healing, understanding, or recovery. Medicine is, after all, largely defined by such acts of humanity in clinical encounters. They may be unresolved, transformative, unifying, or part of continuing care.

The Wakley Prize is named after *The Lancet's* founding Editor, Thomas Wakley, and is awarded to the best essay on any clinical topic of importance to health. Anyone working in a health-related field in any country and at any stage of their career can enter this essay competition. The intimate and discursive form of the essay unites emotions and ideas and imparts new perspectives. We are looking for original essays that are unexpected, insightful, and elegantly written. We want you to share your stories of those humane acts of recognition and care that are at the heart of medicine.

Essay submissions should be 1600–2000 words and should not have been previously published elsewhere in print or online and must be original. Only one submission per author is allowed and essays should not contain any information that might identify individual patients. The deadline is Oct 18, 2021. Entries need to be submitted through *The Lancet's* online editorial submission system with Wakley Prize selected as the submission category. The essays will be anonymised and judged by *Lancet* editors. The winner of the Wakley Prize will receive £2000, and the essay will be published in the final issue of the year. We hope to be moved and enlightened by your entries to this year's Wakley Prize essay competition.

We declare no competing interests.

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¹ Eliot G. *Middlemarch*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1987.

For more on the Wakley Prize essay competition see <https://www.thelancet.com/wakley-essays>

To submit your essay for the Wakley Prize go to <https://www.editorialmanager.com/thelancet/>

